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Catalogue of an Exhibition of Chinese Paintings with Introduction by Mr. Arthur Morrison

August—September, 1911

THE BAILLIE GALLERY
13, Bruton Street, Bond Street, W.

Han Dynasty	...	...	206 B.C.—220 A.D.
Tang „	...	...	618—907 A.D.
Sung „	...	...	960—1279 A.D.
Yuan „	...	...	1280—1367 A.D.
Ming „	...	...	1368—1643 A.D.
Ch'ing „	...	...	1644 onwards.

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Introduction.

It was but as yesterday, as the years go, that the great pictorial art of China was utterly unknown in Europe. For centuries we have read of China and its people in the books of the learned Sinologists, and travellers and resident merchants have brought to us the knowledge they have gathered; yet from none of their works have we been led even to suspect the existence of the great, varied, and profound pictorial art which has engaged the efforts of thousands—literally thousands—of great painters in the Celestial Empire during the past two thousand years. When one comes across any reference to pictures in the writings of the Sinologists to whom we have been taught to look for instruction (and there are slight references, though they are rare enough), it is merely contemptuous—a sort of chuckle, much less serious than a sneer. And indeed if we are to judge by the sort of pictures which until quite recently were considered typical of Chinese art, the pictures brought to this country by those same Sinologists and travellers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the chuckle was the only fit comment. In the average they were atrocious trash, and at their best they were beneath consideration as works of art. But what they represented was the taste of their purchasers, not in

any sense the art of China; rubbish as bad can be bought in any country by anybody who will choose it. And it remains one of the strangest fatalities in the tale of the world's art that of all the many European explorers in the history, traditions, life, and manners of the Chinese who have lived and travelled in the country, not one appears to have had the natural instinct that would have enabled him to recognise merit in a picture of a convention different from that employed in Europe.

When Japan was opened to foreign traffic we were more fortunate, and the arts of the island Empire, in their more readily accessible forms, found speedy appreciation. But the best of the pictorial art of Japan was seen and understood last; and then it was found that for many centuries the Japanese had been ardent admirers and collectors of the works of the great Chinese painters. And so it came about that it was indirectly, by aid of the Japanese, that Europeans at last became aware of the treasure that had so long lain concealed in China.

In that country, however, the pictures of the native masters have been protected by no such careful conservation as has been practised in Japan. Wars, tumults, changes of dynasty, irruptions of barbarian conquerors have destroyed the ancient works in hundreds of thousands, and the few remaining are apt to be poor in condition. Nor is any such orderly division and probable attribution possible with Chinese paintings as with Japanese. Such works of the Chinese painters as were collected contemporaneously by the Japanese enable the connoisseur to judge with reasonable likelihood of the origin of a certain comparatively small number of works, such as those of Muh Ki, Chen So Wang, Li Ti, Liang Chi, Ma Yuen, and

Mi Fu of the Sung dynasty, Yen Hui and Chang Ssu-kung of the Yuen dynasty, and Wen Ching Ming, Lin Liang, Chiu Chi Mien, Wu Wei and Lu Ki of Ming.

Of the actual traceable works and manner of execution of these and perhaps a score more the persistent student may hope to gain some definite knowledge; but before one is able to understand how small a part of the whole *corpus* of Chinese pictorial art this comprises one must learn many things. For instance, there is a concise dictionary of important Chinese artists, published in Japan, which makes no pretence at anything like completeness, but contains 2,700 names; and I think it is well within the mark to say that in almost any hundred genuinely signed Chinese pictures of good quality seventy will bear names not to be found either in this list or in any Chinese biographical dictionary. But the genuinely signed Chinese pictures are but a fraction of the whole; for it seems to be, and ever to have been, the unwavering habit of Chinese picture-dealers to plant a spurious signature and seal of some well-known painter on every picture that came into their hands, good, bad or indifferent, and wholly regardless of style, period, manner, or anything else. This, apparently, because it has been the way of the uncritical Chinese buyer to buy his picture not for its quality but for its signature. The result is a stupendous welter of falsification and confusion that it is hopeless to attempt to bring to anything like order or certainty. But there is this consolation, that the European collector is, or should be, free of the temptation to buy names; he can go among Chinese pictures and gratify his own taste, backing his opinion secure in the knowledge that a good picture will certainly be the work of a good painter, whether it is possible to ascertain his name or not; and confident

that the true connoisseur, even he of the select few capable of identifying the work of the few dozen Chinese painters of which identification is possible, will respect and value a good picture for its qualities regardless of the presence or absence of any signature whatever.

The present exhibition comprises a number of very interesting examples, chiefly of the Ming period, though a few are older. The large picture representing the chase of a hare by an eagle is a fine and interesting example to which the wholly unsuitable signature of Li Ti, of Sung, has been added in the familiar manner. There is an admirable picture of a very lean horse attended by a man, which is attributed to Chao Meng-fu of Yuan, and a very excellent smaller picture similarly ascribed. Other very charming examples bear ascriptions to Lu-Ki, Lin Liang and Wu Wei. No. 26 is a rather dark but very beautiful portrait piece, and a delightful river scene is catalogued No. 28. I have said sufficient to make it clear that signatures and attributions are of less value in connection with Chinese pictures than with any other pictures in existence; and perhaps I need hardly add that I offer no personal guarantee of any attributions that may appear in the catalogue.

ARTHUR MORRISON.

August 1st, 1911.

Chinese Paintings.

Rooms I. & II.

All Pictures are for sale. Prices may be obtained on application to the Attendants.

£ *No.*

100 1. Temple in Mountains. In style of Chou Ying (Ming).

70 2. Cock Watching Rooks Fighting (Ming).

40 3. Landscape (Ming).

150 4. Pheasants and Birds. A Snow Scene by Lin Liang (early Ming).

40 5. Landscape with Sages (Ming).

No.

6. Horse and Rider. Ascribed to Chao Meng Fu (Yuan).

7. Pomegranates and Birds. In the style of Chou Chih Mien (middle Ming).

8. Court Lady (on paper).

9. Eight Immortals. By Wong Yuen (Yuan).

10. The Gambler (Ming).

11. Musical Party in the Mountains. (Late Ming Dynasty).

12. Horse and Mafoo. Attributed to Chao Meng Fu (Yuan).

13. Pheasants and Flowers. Late Ming.

14. Birds and Flowers. Ming Dynasty.

15. Landscape, Water and Trees (Ming).

16. Litterate Asleep. Ming Dynasty.

No.

17. Goddess and Child. By Chui (early Ming).

18. Golden Pheasants and Flowers. By Lui Chi (Ming).

155 19. Heron (in Tang style). (Sung.)

20. Swallows and Cherry Blossom (Yuan).

140 21. The Washing of the White Elephant. Yuan or Early Ming Dynasty.

22. Ducks (Yuan).

23. Ladies and Children (Ming).

140 24. Two Funkwangs (Ming).

25. Three Ducks (on paper). By Chin Ching (Ming).

150 26. God Emperor, Sung Dynasty. By Sing Chung and Suen Tang.

27. Picture with Figures. By K'ai Chi (Ching).

No.

28. River Scene with Boats. By Li Shi (early Ming).

29. Ladies taking Tea. By Chou Yin (Ming).

30. Fishermen under Rock. By Wu Wei (Ming).

31. Painting on Paper, "Amida" (Yuan).

32. Si-Wang-Mu in Clouds (Ming).

33. Monkies on Tree (Yuan).

34. Landscape (in style of Ma Yuan). (Ming).

35. Landscape with Pine Trees (Ming).

36. Tiger. By Li Ki (Ming).

37. Ladies and Houses (Ming).

38. A Pursuit, Eagle and Hare (Ming).

39. Three Ladies in a Garden (Ming).

40. Laughing Boys (Sung).

No.

41. K'ossu (Chinese Goblins). About first half of 18th Century.

42. Flowers and Birds. By Shanyuêh, Ch'ing.

43. Court Lady by Chi-Ku-Sun (Ming).

44. Cats. In style of Chen-Nan-Ping (Ch'ing).

45. Lady with Dog (Ming).

46. Four Ducks and Rushes (on paper). By Pien Chon (Ming).

47. Lotos and Fish (on paper). Ch'ing Dynasty.

48. Painting on Silk "Amida" (Yuan).

49. Fish (on paper). (Ming Dynasty).

50. Butterfly and Flowers (Ming).

51. Pomegranate Blossom (Ming).

52. Birds and Bamboos (Ming).

No.

53. Birds and Flowers (Ming).

54. Cormorant Fishing (Ming).

55. Female Figure with Flowers. Ch'ing Dynasty.

. Scroll "People on Road." Ascribed to Chang Chun (Ming).

. Scroll "Birds and Flowers." Sung or Early Ming.

. Book of Eight Paintings by various Artists (Yuan-Ming).

. Book of Twelve Paintings. In style of Chou Ying (Ming).

All Pictures are for sale. Prices may be obtained on application to the Attendants.

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